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ABSTRACT

The importance of vocational education for mentally retarded students is discussed, and curriculum suggestions are offered. It is explained that tasks should focus on graduated categories of sorting, measuring, manipulating, packaging, assembling, tending, and recording. For each of the categories information is presented on test abilities, curricular tasks, and employment possibilities. A curriculum in self care and social skills is outlined which covers the following areas: language, math, personal development, future employment, and independent living.
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Vocational Ings and Outs
for Developmental Kids
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Vocational Ins and Outs for Developmental Kids

Career education for Developmental children: Is there such a thing? Are my kids going to leave school and be a part of the career working world? Can they have a choice as to what type of career will occupy their life efforts? Why not? With precise diagnosis and creative programming most Developmental students have a chance to succeed. Some of our kids will be placed in a Developmental Center to continue their growth in self-care and social skills. A larger portion will enter sheltered workshops for training and future employment. The more able will work in the everyday working world of competitive employment. However, certain points need to be investigated if handicapped children are to reach their potential and take their rightful place in the work force. The experts in the field have made some important empirical points of interest to the educator. Leaders in special education have varying opinions concerning the ability of the retarded to compete in the world. Each expert has a point of emphasis as to curriculum planning for the desired result--employability. Marc Gold, in an article in the 1972 American Journal of Mental Deficiency, demonstrates that the retarded can learn job skills, but goes on to say that a discrepancy exists between the retarded persons capabilities and the expectancies of the workshop personnel. He reports:

The discrepancy between the retarded persons capabilities and the workshop personnel expectancy

is further illustrated by describing the initial contacts made for the present study. When contact was first made with the workshops to be involved in the study, the directors were shown the training task...asked if they felt their clients were capable of assembling it, all four directors said their most able clients would be incapable of learning the task even on an assembly line... the most limited clients with one exception, learned the task. (9, p. 525).

Elo and Hendel (1972) pose the question of labels. If an employer or agency know that a person is retarded (IQ scores), vocational determinations and feasibility are decided from this information which often creates a problem in habilitation possibilities. Does the label 'mentally retarded' restrict the vocational possibilities for an individual with below average intelligence? Yes, it does, according to the findings of the Elo-Hendel study. A more meaningful guideline for the occupational placement might be on the individual's personal vocational abilities and vocational needs.

DVR, the most widely used funding agency, relies on the AAMD (American Association on Mental Deficiency) definition and counselor evaluation as a basis for determining feasibility. The AAMD defines mental retardation as "sub-average intellectual functioning originating during the developmental period and associated with impairment in adaptive behavior." Impairment may be in the areas of maturation, learning and/or social adjustment. DVR has a problem for their funding is contingent upon the ability to habilitate and close cases in a relatively short time span. Developmental applicants are risks not because of deficient intellectual functioning (academic), but

because of inappropriate adaptive behaviors (social).

A number of writings in special education have reported studies on the characteristics needed by the retarded to bring vocational success within their grasp. Vocational training programs are discussed by Gowan and Goldman (1959) as a necessary entity if the retarded person is to get and keep an adequate job. Performance is contingent upon training. The quality and quantity of the vocational class and workshop instruction needs to be of a supportive type to instill confidence in the worker to provide impetus to successful entry to the work world.

Factors such as home influence (Kolstoe, 1961) and work habits at home and school (McKeracher, Orrit 1972) have a high correlation to vocational success or failure. Trainees from culturally disadvantaged environments with little family emotional support have a lower rate than trainees on the opposite end of the social continuum.

Brolin (1972) named personality, physical appearance and sex as components in the total employment picture for the retarded population. Evidence of a physical handicap was an influence on prospective employers polled. The retarded person without obvious physical handicaps would have a priority for jobs irrespective of cognitive functioning.

Males predominated over females in obtaining jobs at the time of the Cowan (1959) study. In 1976, the figures may be higher for the women, because of the overall increase of

working women spanning the entire population.

Interestingly enough, personality characteristics and age influenced job success more than IQ according to Peterson and Smith (1960) in their study of post-school adjustment. The exact personality factors which predict success were not reported. IQ was not as important as emotional maturity. Age is a factor in the IQ question, for many Developmental children need more years to acquire the necessary maturity for success.

A worthwhile method of obtaining a more objective viewpoint is to gather information from other special educators from other places. In February of 1973 a conference was held on Career Education for the handicapped. Special educators came from throughout the country to discuss and to write objectives on the subject of employment for handicapped young people. Tom Lake, CEC Information Center, interviewed and compiled comments from the group of leaders in attendance.

The conclusions from the conference were that handicapped young people coming from the schools are able to perform most required skills on a variety of jobs, but they are not prepared socially to meet the demands of competitive and/or sheltered employment. A fact which must be faced is that special education kids when labeled on the job by the foreman and fellow workers are expected to do twice the job of other workers. This labeling would be at a minimum if social behaviors were acceptable.

Mainstreaming (contact with others, not placed in regular classes) on a national scale is an objective to afford special kids normalizing practice before termination from school. Dexter (1958) and Johnson (1959) conducted studies on the retarded person's social position within the normal environment. Both authors found that the retarded are placed in a sociometric "scapegoated" situation. This unfortunate circle of events will continue unless all children have an opportunity to practice being together. "Feeding special children to the wolves" (a comment often made) is not easy, but overprotection can be disastrous to a child upon termination from school.

A task force was strongly recommended by the conference to foster cooperation among community leaders, parents and the schools. We have been surrounded and drowned by the tradition that the retarded are second class citizens. This is not true! Retarded people can learn many skills and they can learn them well. They do not have to always take the mundane, boring jobs that the more intelligent workers don't want. Handicapped people have a right to a choice too. Up to this point underemployment or unemployment has been a grim outcome for the mentally handicapped person.

An increased emphasis on vocational adjustment and a decreased emphasis on academic achievement was predicted by Burke and Sellin (1972) as to the program trends for retarded children. Social-vocational programming will shift the retarded student's self-concept to his or her ability as a

worker from his or her self-concept depending upon academic ability. The social and occupational adequacy of the mentally retarded has developed to the point that mass media, governmental agencies, foundations and occasionally private industry and emotional institution are concerned enough to testify that "the retarded can be helped," that "they are reliable workers," or that "they can learn" (p. 126).

There are 2.5 million handicapped youth in the United States (all handicaps) according to Kenneth Hoyt (1975). A breakdown of these figures places 21% employed or in college, 8% helping at home, 26% unemployed or on welfare and 3% are totally dependent within an institution. These percentages place 2 out of 5 handicapped young people unoccupied without meaningful work. An educated evaluation of this data would place 1.9 of the 2 in the mentally retarded classification.

Special educators are no different than any other educator in that it is important to the teacher that each child meet his or her potential. Career education is important to the special children too. A career education emphasis in special classrooms is an avenue toward turning children from a potentially "high stress factor" to a "high success factor."

Summary

The components of a career oriented program in a classroom for developmental students can be assigned to the old cliches of self-care, socialization, and economic usefulness.

Kirk and Johnson (1951) devote considerable space to the teaching of "the practical arts," and the concepts outlined in Educating the Retarded Child still apply; but we are dealing with a more sophisticated retarded child today and simulated tasks such as making boxes just isn't enough. Starting a vocational program in high school does not give students enough time to come close to potential, or teachers enough time to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in the student.

It may be concluded that mentally retarded students need early intervention in practical work skills to ready them for future employment. Work skills to be outlined later are imperative and social skills are a must.

Through training the student can improve physical functioning such as finger dexterity, coordination and the academic skills of counting and reading; but of prime importance is helping the student toward finding his or her place in society. Studies and workshop programs tell us that work skills and socio-emotional development are required if a person is to succeed on the job.

Socio-emotional skills are important to all developmental students, but to the more able the social skills are a requirement if competitive employment is a future goal. Time in the school and community mainstream would be a worthwhile goal for the high ability students.

An emphasis is needed on social and self-care skills to give the student some tools for survival. Heavy academic

programs seem to be necessary only for the high potential students who can use academics in their future employment.

Labeling kids may be necessary for funding purposes, but labeling is not necessary for teaching kids. If labels were left at the door of the classroom, if expectations were set a little higher than the student was suppose to perform, by the attached label (IQ, classification...), and he or she is presented a "hands on," enriched curriculum--all involved might be surprised at the forthcoming results.

When parents experience a happy child who is moving toward something meaningful in the future, they usually will cooperate with the school and give as much support as they have to give. This cooperation can come in the form of extending social and self-care practice at home, continuing the child in school until age 21 or attending conferences to offer their assistance in the training of their child. Most parents do care, but for a variety of reasons they sometimes cannot demonstrate as much support as educators would hope to receive.

Normalizing a student at any age (the younger the better) needs to be a high priority item in all programs for the handicapped. Retarded kids have to be best, not average, for optimum success in the interactions of life. It is impossible to make a retarded child normal by available standards, but it is possible to make most retarded children able to react socially in an acceptable manner. Someday these children will leave the world of academia and whether they compete in

employment or just daily living they will be accepted or rejected on their social merits.

The goals of Career Education for the retarded is similar to career education for the regular school population.

Kenneth Hoyt, a leader in career education, outlines the concepts as follows: (1975).

1. An exchange program needs to exist between labor and the school.
2. Field trips should exist from the school into the business world.
3. Every high school person should have a work experience.
4. School-industry job placement programs should exist for all students.
5. Occupational resource persons from the business industry labor force should be established for all students.
6. A Community School staffed by business-industry-labor personnel should be initiated.
7. Retired persons should be used as a resource.
8. Work should be more personally satisfying to each individual worker.
9. Every student should have a marketable skill upon leaving school.
10. Every student upon leaving school should have a job.

The goals (concepts) accepted for regular students are not much different than a good program for developmental students. A criticism has been leveled at special education for gleaning from our regular education colleagues to present "watered down" programs to our special education students. In fact, special education has always had a pragmatic approach to education; therefore practical career education programs have come in part from special education.

Employers of retarded individuals were surveyed and the following characteristics were listed according to importance

(Warren, 1961):

1. Self-confidence.
2. Cheerfulness.
3. Cooperates with the supervisor.
4. Cooperates with other employees.
5. Respects supervisor.
6. Minds own business.
7. Accepts criticism.
8. Mixes socially.
9. Neat and clean.
10. Prompt.
11. Safety conscious.
12. Careful with property.
13. Completes work on time.
14. Quality of work.
15. Understands work.
16. Shows initiative.
17. Total personality and social adjustment.
18. Total work efficiency.

Again the point is made that self-care, socialization and work habits are necessary if the retarded adult is to succeed at meaningful work.

It sounds like an overwhelming task, creating a vocationally-oriented curriculum. Any new task is difficult unless you break it down into smaller components (how many times have you said that?).

Curriculum Suggestions

Many components exist for a career education program; however the creative teacher can add to this list those components that best fit the needs of the students in the class. How each of these concepts are taught depends on the innovativeness of the teacher, the building environment and above all the needs of each individual child.

The world of work as the world of school presents tasks requiring categories of differing cognitive and motor

competencies. The prevailing graduated categories are sorting, measuring, manipulating, packaging, assembling, tending and recording.

SORTING

Able to discriminate colors, sizes, textures, numbers, letters, compositions and forms.

Test abilities

Discrimination, finger dexterity, eye-hand coordination, perception, detail, figure ground.

Curricular suggestions

1. Poker chips by colors
2. Plastic beads by color, shape and size
3. Bolts, nuts and washers by size
4. Pegboard exercises by color (patterns)
5. Sizing dowels by size and color
6. Tracking numbers and letters
7. Paper discrimination sheets-figureground

Employment possibilities:

1. Candy packer (sitting)
2. Dishwasher
3. Clothing sorter-cleaning and laundry
4. Sheltered shop employment

MEASURING

Able to measure solid surfaces, liquids, distances.
✓ Able to conserve.
Able to approximate weight and distance--at least heavier and lighter than.

Tests abilities

Perception, discrimination, finger dexterity, eye-hand, detail.

Curricular suggestions

1. Counting a variety of classroom items
2. Exercises in heaviest, lightest, more, less, up, down, over, under, inside, outside
3. Use of the measuring cup and spoons

4. Use of a ruler and yardstick
5. Housecleaning and cooking skills
6. Dressing and undressing self and dolls
7. Aware of body in space

Employment possibilities

1. Kitchen work
2. Janitorial
3. Factory assembly (simple)
4. Sheltered shop employment

MANIPULATING

Able to handle materials in cutting, picking up, lifting and right-left orientation.

Test abilities

Spatial form perception, strength, gross motor finger dexterity, eye-foot, eye-hand, tool use, discrimination, holding, grasping, balance, and stabilizing hand movements.

Curricular suggestions

1. Puzzles
2. P.E. activities - relays, ball games, balance beam, playground equipment
3. Rearranging classroom.
4. On-hands - science, cooking experience
5. Gardening projects
6. Housekeeping tasks - sweeping, advanced cooking, ironing, bed making, washing clothes
7. Cutting on a line
8. Tracing from a pattern
9. Picking up small items with a tweezer

Employment possibilities

1. Garment worker - construction
2. Custodial
3. Bus boy or girl
4. Bellhop
5. Gardening
6. Factory assembly
7. Housework
8. Laborer

PACKAGING

Able to perform a task in steps.

Tests abilities

Counting, attending to sequential directions, eye-hand, gross motor, finger dexterity, detail, number sense, ordering, arranging operations.

Curricular suggestions

1. Wrap items - sandwiches, packages, paper folding projects
2. Twist wax paper around an item
3. Open a bottle and fill to instructions
4. Able to open a container that screws, flips open or has a cork top

Employment possibilities

1. Food packing plant
2. Laundry presser
3. Stock clerk
4. Bakery worker
5. Floor covering installer or helper
6. Factory assembly

ASSEMBLY

Able to assemble nuts, bolts and washers, staple, collate, assemble items by verbal and/or diagramatic instructions.

Tests abilities

Gross motor, finger dexterity, following directions (verbal diagramatic), counting, use of tools (hand and power).

Curricular suggestions

1. Bolt, nut, washer assembly
2. Collate a series of colored papers, bulletins or school papers together by directions
3. Operate a stapler
4. Pick up papers at school
5. Pass out papers
6. Use a paper punch
7. String tags
8. Glue paper together by size and color
9. Art projects requiring cutting, glueing, and coloring
10. Clothing construction, needle craft projects

11. Woodcraft projects using a saw, screwdriver, and hammer
12. Use of small wrench - motor or carburetor assembly and disassembly

Employment possibilities

1. Machine operator
2. Hospital housekeeping and attendant
3. Assembler (electronics)
4. Laundry work (machinery)
5. Construction helper

RECORDING

Able to file by color, number.
 Able to weigh items on a scale.
 Able to use a ruler, triangle, T-square.
 Able to follow a 5 or 6 step verbal or diagramatic instruction.
 Able to explain an operation to others and ask succinct questions.

Tests abilities

Gross motor, finger dexterity, motor-cognitive integration, language level, personality characteristics (self-awareness), ability to command a social situation (social awareness), understands place in a situation (environmental awareness).

Curricular suggestions

1. Copying shapes using proper tools (square, triangle, rectangle, a box in three dimension...)
2. Reading diagrams - model construction, clothing patterns, woodworking patterns.
3. Typing - a student paper
4. Filing classroom papers - set up the system
5. Run dittos
6. Run messages to the office without a note
7. Take attendance
8. Oral reports and classroom discussions
9. Telephone experience
10. Follow recipes
11. Three-dimensional puzzles
12. Job acquiring

Employment possibilities

1. Copy skills (drafting)
2. Fisherman

3. Guard - nightwatchman
4. Truck team driver
5. Cake decorator
6. Clothing presser (department store)
7. Factory worker
8. Longshoreman
9. Nursery employee (plants)
10. Child care (daycare center)

It is assumed that the capability of handling a job in the recording area would give the necessary skills to handle jobs in any other category. The job suggestions listed are categories found in the Dictionary of Occupational Skills and were selected according to required skills mentioned for each. Many other local positions fall within the perimeters of the categories set.

An overall curriculum in vocational and survival skills could include the following categories. Again, these are suggestions, not rules. Each teacher has to consider child and personal need and style.

CURRICULUM: Self-care and Social areas

I. Academic areas

A. Language

1. School bulletins, billboards
2. Newspapers, magazines, (pictures, want-ads, advertising)
3. Menus
4. Bus schedules (street names, time)
5. Labels on products
6. Telephone book

B. Math

1. Coin discrimination
2. Money equivalencies
3. Making change
4. Discerning price tags and menu prices
5. Telling time
6. Discerning written time to clock
7. Banking skills
8. Postage - stamp equivalencies and money order
9. Map reading

II. Self-care social areas

A. Personal development

1. Live sports (swimming, bowling, volleyball)
2. Spectator sports (football, basketball...)
3. Mental health aspects (relaxation, expressing feelings, dealing with stress, anger and upset, knowing a need of time for self)
4. School spirit

B. Future employment

1. Techniques in applying for a job
2. Aware of the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities, Social Security Office, Employment Security, DVE
3. Driver's training
4. Bus transportation

C. Independent living

1. Meal planning, shopping, preparation
2. Clothing purchase, care, construction, repair
3. General housekeeping skills (cleaning agents, tools, poisons)
4. Use of media - paper, Newsweek, Journal, Better Homes and Gardens, etc., TV, radio, commercials
5. Communication by telephone (personal and business)
6. Awareness of supportive agencies - Police, Fire Department
7. Personal care (hair, make-up,...)
8. Sexuality and reproduction (personal hygiene, marriage, child care)
9. Health care (need for a doctor, dental care, self first aid, implication of medications)

Goldstein (1964) has observed that:

From the time of the first treatment center for the mentally retarded in the mid-nineteenth century, the major goal of interested disciplines and services has been to help the mentally retarded individual achieve social and occupational adequacy at maturity.

This is true and better yet possible. It is possible in 1976 with more innovative methods coming from better trained, creative teachers Developmental Children will take their deserved place in society.

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SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What curricular items in my program could be categorized under social-vocational skills?
2. What innovations could be made to turn academic areas to career-vocational areas?
3. Set up a means for parents to receive information concerning social-vocational curriculum in your program.
4. How do we set our expectations? How do we measure a child's vocational capabilities at 21, when the child is only six?
5. All program items should emphasize career education. Do you agree or disagree? Is this idea possible in our program?
6. Marc Gold diagnoses and trains kids allowing them to experiment. Is this idea possible in our special classes?
7. Goldstein states that technological changes and economic conditions set the trends for employment of the handicapped. Is this a fact we must accept? Can we alter these facts? How?
8. What are the observable behaviors required for self-concept?
9. List the behaviors in your children which would categorize them as high, medium or low in the area of social skills.
10. Count the objectives for each child in your class. How many can be placed under academic, social and self-care areas?